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Lao PDR

18 September 2023

Local time

Participation in the new international gender equality strategy 2023

1. What are the most important things we should work on?

- The most important thing we should work on is to gradually change cultural norm and perspective toward gender equality. This is the hardest challenge to achieve but it is necessary to do so. If this issue is yet solved, there will still be gender discrimination, oppression, exploitation and other gender inequality. I know it might take time and efforts particularly collective efforts of different sectors, but I am ready to devote the rest of my life to do so. I hope that I can be part of connecting bridging such collective efforts.

I observe that the less counter perspective on gender equality, the more gender equality develop and grow. In other words, the more supportive culture, the more gender equality lift up. And to do so firstly we need to work on providing knowledge on gender equality to all local people so that they acknowledge this issue, whether is adopted in society or not. Information and knowledge on the issue should be provided to people at all ages and sexes including those living in rural and remote areas which I will explain further in my reply to question 2.

2. What is the best way to do this?

- The best way to do this is to firstly providing knowledge, then social, medical and legal counseling services and assistances together with economic empowerment so that they can survive by themselves sustainably afterward. The best approach should start and link the entire circle of gender. As we know that gender identity and choices start from home, school, workplace and society, so we should work within these chains. In fact, gender is in every story and every story has gender issue. Without recognition and respect of other people or other groups' gender, will cause production, profitability and living sustainability be less than it should be.

- Providing knowledge on gender equality at every local authority for instance placing posters, brochures, and/or booklets to each household, included gender rights statement or slogan on some publications (marriage documents), regular meetings, organizing or collaborating with local women's union. Each village authority needed to nominate at least one or a few representatives of women's group/unit who can deliver messages, guideline and strategies on gender issues to all villagers (As LGBTQ+ law and representation are yet fully adopted in Lao P.D.R., thus this group of other gender can include and address the issue through this system and/or organization). Ensuring knowledge and information access of all local residents is important and this should be done along with providing such knowledge to young girls and all boys at schools when appropriate, so that girls who might be target of victims and vulnerable to gender inequality, domestic violence and violence from outsiders can know how to protect themselves and seek for help. Besides that, various platforms of information on the issue could be provided through popular new technology such as mobile phone apps, social media, official websites (for researchers, studies, statistic references and other related events) etc.

- Another approach to tackle the issue is to provide social, medical and legal counseling services and assistance to different groups of diverse gender (males, females and others). Some psychological, medical and legal experts, academics, scholars and volunteers should be formed up at different levels. It needed work with all related sectors, partners and the general public who might be able to be part of such team including some securities or police in some more severe cases involved life threatening. What should be done regularly is providing training of trainers in this area when appropriate. This could be discussed further in detail and adapted into practical situation flexibly.

- Lastly, providing economic empowerment for target group and vulnerable group. Economic empowerment should be done in various approaches and levels as the target groups might include people from various types with different talents and skills. Support could be divided both technically and financially through education, trainings, funds, awards, long-term and short - term scholarships within the countries and overseas and other activities. For instance: education support for people from rural areas, ethnicity, with disabilities, and/or poor families including young females, single parents, awards for individuals, students, model families and villages, and offices with best friendly gender environment. Some successful female role models or well-known men who are gender advocates can help to be part of training and driving force of economic empowerment. This approach is also in line with the government's policy on poverty reduction, thus we should work with other state and private partners for instance: Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao Women's Union, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, UNFPA in Laos, CARE, Gender Development Agency (GDA), Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth's Union, Trade Union, Chamber of Industry and Commerce etc. I am glad to be part of promotion such activities through Lao media especially on the Lao National Television where I am currently working with the news team for instance daily general news program and a specific program on gender equality broadcasting on LNTV and its official FB and

others. This might include cooperation with other state media of our partners such as Lao National Radio, newspapers and other media platforms. To advocate further step on gender issue of our country, we also need to exchange some lessons and better strategies or just sharing what's happening related to gender issues in other countries in the region. A weekly TV program on "Lao women and their friends in Asia" or "Asian women" might be considered to strengthen women power for instance news exchange among women in Asia countries, live and distance interviews across borders or invited guests from other countries.

3. How can we help other countries with gender equality?

- The DFAT could help to support and realize mentioned above approaches. Besides that, I would like to ask for your consideration to help me further my study on female journalist inclusion particularly in broadcasting industry (see the attached file and link) and other data collection, researches and studies on gender equality in Lao P.D.R. which is essential tool and references for implementing gender equality in Laos. Although Laos has a considerable gender equality rate, gender inclusion in media workplace still has a wide gap and is far from comparable, not to mention other areas of careers. Due to lack of budget allocated for data collection from the government, it is hard to carry out and get accurate figures and statistics. However, to diagnosis the symptom or practical situation of gender equality, this is the first move that necessary for further implementation and treatment of the right disease in specific area of problem. From my experience as a local researcher and government official, there are very few researches on female inclusion in this area and my research might be one of the very first of its kinds. I hope that from this breaking through in my country, there will be further consideration and assistance in this area. Generally, data collection and academic analysis should be encouraged. Fund, trainings and scholarships in building human resource to work in this area is important.

4. What else do we need to think about in the strategy?

- Integrate the entire circle of gender equality/inequality.
- Pay more attention to prevention through education
- Pay more attention to mental violence which has long - term impact to the affected people rather than physical violence
- Female journalists is among surprisingly interested issue of gender inequality where many female journalists encounter family, spouse, workplace and cultural norm burden and obstacles. There is a high and increasing rate of divorce and being single of female media workers.
- Inclusive leadership and leaders representing all sexes should be promoted.

- Consider country context which might be vary from each other. Local participation is this mission is needed.

Thank you.